

PRESS RELEASE

2012-13 Columbia County Property Tax Statements

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The 2012-13 Columbia County Assessment and Tax Roll has been certified and property tax bills have been mailed to Columbia County property owners.

Between January 1, 2011 and January 1, 2012, real market values for most residential properties continued to decline, however, at a much lower rate than the previous year. Due to the continued decline, there are more properties with real market values falling below the maximum assessed value, and are therefore paying taxes based on the real market value.

For the 2010-11 tax year, only 725 out of a total of 24529 properties countywide had a real market value lower than their maximum assessed value. For the 2011-12 tax year, this number increased to 6000 out of a total of 24363 properties, and for the 2012-13 tax year, there are a total of 8254 out of 24443. Commercial property owners had the least percentage of properties at 6.03% that are below their maximum assessed value this year, while the Cities of Saint Helens and Columbia City residential property owners had the highest percentage of properties at 68.45% that are below their maximum assessed value.

The closer real market value gets to the maximum assessed value of properties may result in a loss of revenue for some districts due to compression. Compression occurs when a category of government exceeds its consolidated rate limit when applied to the real market value of a property. The consolidated rates are \$5.00/\$1,000 real market value for education and \$10.00/\$1,000 real market value for general government. Consolidated education rates for Saint Helens, Scappoose, Rainier and Vernonia, and consolidated general government rates in the cities of Clatskanie and Rainier exceed their rate limits. If the full consolidated rate applied to the assessed value of a property is more than the consolidated rate limit applied to the real market value, each district's tax in that category is reduced proportionately so that it does not exceed the rate limits. However, if a district also has a voter approved local option levy, the local option levy is compressed before the permanent operating levies. Voter approved bonded debt levies are excluded from rate limitations.

Due to the market decline and minimal new construction in the county, there is very little change in the total assessed value for most taxing districts. This will result in a minimal increase, and in some cases, a reduction in property tax revenue received by most taxing districts during the 2012-13 fiscal year.

A total of \$54,819,790 in property taxes are being billed for the county, cities, schools and special districts. That amount is 1.79 percent more than was billed last year. In addition, a total of \$1,165,118 will be collected for such things as drainage district

assessments and the Oregon Department of Forestry's fire patrol special assessments. That amount is 7.16 percent higher than last year.

Countywide, the market value of all taxable property increased from \$5.48 billion to \$5.49 billion, an increase of only 0.25 percent. The total tax assessed value this year is \$4,113,111,742 or 1.35 percent higher than last year.

The first payment of the tax bill is due on Thursday, November 15, 2012. At least one third of the amount is due at that time. Payments can be made at the tax office in the courthouse on Monday through Thursday between the hours of 8:30 am and 5:00 pm. The courthouse county offices are closed to the public on Fridays. For payments that are made using a bank's bill pay service, the tax account number should be noted in the memo field. Payments that are mailed need to be postmarked by the 15th. A return envelope will be included with the statements. The second and third installments are due by February 15, 2012 and May 15, 2012, however the County does not send out statements for the February or May due dates.

Columbia County is once again providing a way to pay property taxes with E-checks and credit and debit cards through the Point & Pay website. Property Tax payments can be made with your E-checks and credit and debit cards on-line at www.co.columbia.or.us, or by calling 1-866-587-4007. There is a 2.95% charge to use your credit or debit card and a flat fee of \$2.95 for E-checks.

This year, arrangements have been made with the St. Helens Community Federal Credit Union (all branches) as an authorized collector for the County to collect only the 2012-13 property tax payments through November 15, 2012.

Property owners who pay the entire amount due by November 15th will receive a three percent discount. If two thirds of the bill is paid by November 15th a two percent discount of the amount paid will be allowed.

Property owners may appeal the value of their property as in past years. However, there would only be a reduction in the taxes due if the market value falls below the assessed value. The deadline for filing an appeal is December 31, 2012. Appeal forms are available from the County Clerk or County Assessors Office, or can be found online at www.co.columbia.or.us/departments/assessors-office.